

Bryan Ahern
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Fairview Park, OH 44126

August 30, 2004

Michael Powell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Ashcroft Internet Snooping Request

Michael Powell:

As a concerned individual, I am writing to express my opposition to the Department of Justice's request that all new Internet communication services be required to have built-in wiretapping access.

I do not believe this requirement is necessary. Longstanding laws already require Internet Service Providers and Internet telephone companies to allow the FBI to conduct surveillance. The FBI is going far beyond these existing powers by trying to force the industry to actually build its systems around government eavesdropping. It is the equivalent of the government requiring all new homes be built with a peephole for law enforcement to look through.

I am very concerned that this requirement represents an end-run around Congress. Lawmakers, after extensive deliberations, set up boundaries for how the FBI can collect information between sources like phone companies and data sources like e-mail. The FBI's aggressive and expansive reading of the law would bypass the legislative process to alter that careful balance.

I understand that by requiring a master key to our personal communications, the government is creating the very real potential for hackers and thieves – or even rogue government agents – to access our personal communications. Past efforts to provide this sort of "backdoor" access have not been successful and only created a rich opportunity for hackers.

Once again, I urge you to oppose the dangerous suggestion of the Department of Justice that our new Internet communication technologies should have built-in wiretapping.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter.

Sincerely,



Bryan R. Ahern
440-331-7779

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